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Contact: Christina Villacorte, [213-447-1277](tel:213-447-1277)

Email: cvillacorte@bos.lacounty.gov

Contact: Sharita Moon, [213-974-1300](tel:213-974-1300)

Email: smoon@bos.lacounty.gov

Mentoring the Future of Law Enforcement

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) recently completed a pilot program that mentored young men and women of color to reach their full potential, while also recruiting a new – and more diverse – generation of law enforcement professionals.

LASD's Youth Mentoring and Career Guidance Program provided 45 youth, ages 17-23, with specialized training and work experience for six weeks over the summer. All participants were from the County's Second District.

Launched in partnership with Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and the Community and Senior Services Department's Workforce Development Programs, the initiative was in response to [President Barack Obama's My Brother's Keeper Community Challenge](#) embraced by the County's Board of Supervisors.

"We all have to do our part to tear down the barriers that keep young men and women of color from reaching their full potential," said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas who coauthored, with Supervisor Hilda Solis, the [Board motion to accept the President's challenge](#).

"This mentoring program not only creates opportunity for youth, it also helps to ensure that our next generation of law enforcement professionals is demographically representative of the communities they protect and serve," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas added.

During the program's graduation ceremony at the Hall of Justice in October, mentee Jaime Hernandez radiated optimism. "Being part of this program, we have hope," he said. "We're the foundation of creating a better community."

Aside from career education in the fields of public safety and law enforcement, and lectures on the importance of public trust and community-oriented policing, the program also focused on the mentees' character attributes. Mentor Deputies talked to them about such topics as honesty and work ethic.

Deputy Kareem Douglas said he began his own law enforcement career when he was about the same age as his mentees. "I would like to see them follow the same path it took me to get to where I am today," he said.

In her graduation speech, mentee Chardea McCullough said the program taught her self-motivation. "I used to think about quitting or giving up if I felt I was going to fail, even if the finish line was only a few steps away," she said. "Now I've learned to pick myself up and follow through, even if I might not succeed."

The program concluded with preparing mentees to take the exam for the entry-level position of Safety Security Officer, [opening a career path](#) toward the rank of Deputy Sheriff and further promotion.

Those who might not qualify or choose not to pursue such a career path may be referred to alternative employment opportunities in the County or to an [America's Job Center of California](#) youth program for additional job readiness support, training and subsidized work experience.

"Set your goals, find out what it's going to take to reach those goals, and go get 'em," LASD Chief James Hellmold encouraged the graduates. "Continue on the positive direction that you're headed."

Mentee Alejandro Zamarripa declared, "I want to be a deputy sheriff someday, enforcing laws, keeping crime off the streets."

"Five to 10 years from now, I see myself becoming a homicide detective," added Chardea McCollough. Monalise Fortuna, another mentee, said, "I see myself in the FBI working as an agent, owning a nonprofit organization that helps underprivileged communities."

With My Brother's Keeper, the President challenged communities to implement a coherent cradle-to-college-and-career strategy for improving the life outcomes of all young people to ensure that they can reach their full potential, regardless of who they are, where they come from, or the circumstances into which they are born.

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